

GREEN RIBBON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Recap of meeting on July 1, 1999

Members in attendance: Carole Bellew, Dick Brown, Martha Eddison, Bunni Fatoye-Matory, Joseph Grassi, Fran Mastroianni, David McGowan, Beth Rubenstein, Albe Simenas, Anne Strong, Aaron Spira, Robert Winters, Fred Yalouris *City Staff:* Lisa Peterson, Carlton Hart, Stuart Dash, Paul Ryder

Beth welcomed the committee to the meeting and briefly explained that tonight's meeting would begin to cover the topic of park types as established by the National Recreation and Parks Association and continue the discussion of the acquisition criteria. She said that the discussion would focus on several types of parks: tot lots, neighborhood parks, community parks, large urban parks and school parks. These park types were explained further in the tables and other documents handed out at the meeting. There were also large maps around the room that showed the geographic location of each park type in the city.

Tot Lots

Stuart then began to explain the 5 park type maps and he began with tot lots. He explained that this map located all of the tot lots the city including those located within larger parks. Some of these tot lots like Hurley Park and Cooper Park were smaller while some were within larger parks like Danehy and Donnelly Field. Stuart explained that the national standards suggested that each park should be within a walking distance of a quarter mile. The committee members felt that they would walk a quarter mile to a tot lot and thought that it was an appropriate distance for Cambridge. Stuart then said that the city looked to be well served by tot lots and that the only areas that didn't fall within a quarter mile of a tot lot were in west Cambridge (intersection of Huron and Concord), around the Russell Field area, and around Porter Square.

Neighborhood and Community Parks

The neighborhood park and community park maps continued with the national standards typology, although as described, these standards are not a perfect fit with uses at Cambridge parks. The neighborhood park national standards generally call for a park size of 5-10 acres, quarter mile to half mile walking radius, informal recreation, limited programmed use and a primary user who lived in close proximity. Stuart noted that the handbook on the national standards encourages each community to alter the standards to better reflect what was happening in their community. He also stated that by examining the maps that identified the neighborhood category of park type one could begin to see where potential underserved areas were. He pointed out the quarter mile and half mile walking radius shown on the map and how much of the city was covered if the half mile walking radius was noted. The Mid Cambridge, West Cambridge and Agassiz Neighborhoods all had significant gaps in coverage along with the Porter Square and North Mass. Ave areas when one just took into account the quarter mile radius. Stuart noted that while it is expected that one can walk to a neighborhood park, a community park is intended to be used by two to three neighborhoods.

Martha Eddison felt that a half-mile was a long way to go to visit a neighborhood park. Other committee members agreed. Others felt that JFK Park on Memorial Drive was a neighborhood park used by many residents. There was also a discussion concerning Donnelly Field, Gore Street Park, Russell Field, Sennott Park and Kingsley Park at Fresh Pond Reservation. Committee members felt that Gore Street should be considered a neighborhood park while Russell Field and Kingsley Park are community parks. It was noted that Russell Field does not have a tot lot but is due to get one in its upcoming renovation. Sennott Park and Donnelly Field were thought to be best left in both categories as they function in more than one way for different users. Robert Winters commented on the lack

of active use space in Mid-Cambridge. He stated that Library Park is the only park large enough to have active uses in this area of the city and that it wasn't enough. Public transportation was also indicated on these maps, as not all park users drive cars. Only bus lines with no more than ten-minute headway (or wait time) were included on the map because waiting longer for a bus may preclude many people from using this mode to reach a park destination. The only maps with the bus route included were the neighborhood, community and large urban park maps.

Large Urban Parks

The discussion concerning the large urban park category of parks included a discussion of Danehy Park and Fresh Pond Reservation and whether or not to include the Charles River Reservation in this category. Some committee members felt it definitely should be included while others felt some of it was not usable space and that only certain sections should be included. They all agreed that it should be categorized as an open space resource, they were just unsure which category it best fit.

The committee then talked about the elementary schools and their need to have open space associated with them. Several schools had little or no open space associated with it and the committee felt like these schools needed to be a high priority.

Finally, the committee continued their discussion of criteria for acquiring open space. Ideas ranged from establishing more public/private agreements for the use of land and trying to buy open space in close proximity to other existing city-owned open space, to taking advantage of underutilized small spaces and acting quicker when an opportunity presents itself.

There was a brief discussion of workplan and the question was asked when this process will be complete. Beth answered that it should be finished by December 1999. Martha also asked about subcommittee work and if that would take place. Beth, answered yes it would probably happen sooner rather than later and that we needed as a group to get to a certain point so we all new what we wanted to accomplish. The committee decided to meet throughout the summer.

The next meeting topic will be park uses and it will take place on July 15th, at 7:00 p.m. in the CDD conference room again.